

## Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY EA/RA/HEHOROWITZ/MJ  
APPROVED BY EA - RICHARD HOLBROOKE  
S/S -SVALERGA EUR/CE:SKLINGERMAN  
EA - RBOAKLEY (DRAFT)  
EA/PRCM - DANDERSON (DRAFT)  
EA/VLC - FBROWN (DRAFT)  
EUR/SOV - RPERITO (DRAFT)  
INR/REA - JSYLVESTER (DRAFT)  
EUR/NE - HDWOOLFLEY  
EUR/WE -RPAGANELLI EUR/RPM:JGALLUP  
-----127118 202237Z /64

O P 202201Z JUL 78  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA  
AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE  
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY BONN  
USMISSION USNATO  
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY  
USLO PEKING PRIORITY  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY  
CINCPAC HONOLULU HAWAII PRIORITY

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EXDIS MIL ADDEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CB, VM, US, PDIP, MILI

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN INDOCHINA  
CINCPAC EXCLUSIVELY FOR ADMIRAL WEISNER

1. AMBASSADORS OR CHARGES AT ADDRESSEE POSTS, AT THEIR DISCRETION, MAY DRAW ON THE FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT OF INDOCHINA SITUATION IN DISCUSSIONS WITH SENIOR HOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. IN DOING SO, YOU SHOULD MAKE CLEAR THAT THE UNITED STATES, WHILE FOLLOWING EVENTS CLOSELY, WILL NOT BECOME DIRECTLY INVOLVED. OUR HOPE IS THAT THE ISSUES WILL BE PEACEFULLY RESOLVED AND THAT THEY WILL NOT UPSET THE CURRENTLY FAVORABLE SITUATION WHICH WE BELIEVE PREVAILS IN SEASIA GENERALLY.

2. INTRODUCTION. UNDERLYING THE PRESENT TENSE SITUATION IN INDOCHINA ARE LONG-STANDING FRICTIONS BETWEEN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM AND BETWEEN VIETNAM AND CHINA WHICH HAVE ANCIENT HISTORIC ROOTS. RELATIVELY SUBMERGED FOR ALMOST A CENTURY OF FRENCH AND LATER AMERICAN PRESENCE, THESE LONG-STANDING ENMITIES RESURFACED WITH GREAT REPIDITY IN THE LAST FEW YEARS. IT IS QUITE NOTEWORTHY THAT IN ASIA TODAY, THE THREE GREATEST AREAS OF TENSION ARE ALL BETWEEN COMMUNIST REGIMES, BASED ON LONG-STANDING

NATIONALIST FEELINGS AND TRADITIONAL RIVALRIES (USSR-CHINA, CHINA-VIETNAM, VIETNAM-CAMBODIA). THE NEW REGIME IN PHNOM PENH -- FIERCELY XENOPHOBIC, INTENSELY  
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ASSERTIVE OF WHAT IT CONSIDERS ITS RIGHTFUL BORDERS, AND FEARFUL OF VIETNAMESE INTENTIONS -- HAS LOOKED TO PEKING FOR FRIENDSHIP AND SUPPORT. PEKING, ON ITS PART, WANTS TO CURB VIETNAM'S INFLUENCE IN THE AREA AND ITS ASPIRATIONS TO DOMINATE ALL OF INDOCHINA. PEKING BELIEVES THAT VIETNAMESE ACTIONS SUPPORT MOSCOW'S DESIGNS AND PATTERN OF EXPANSION, AND ARE SIMILAR TO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ANGOLA, THE HORN OF AFRICA AND RECENTLY IN AFGHANISTAN. HANOI, EXTREMELY UPSET BY AN INCREASINGLY COSTLY BORDER WAR WITH CAMBODIA (AT A TIME OF SERIOUS INTERNAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS), SEES PEKING AS TAKING AN INCREASINGLY HOSTILE ATTITUDE.

3. THE ISSUE OF THE CHINESE MINORITY IN VIETNAM BECAME A MAJOR NEW IRRITANT WHEN HANOI DECIDED TO CRACK DOWN ON THE MERCHANT SECTOR -- IMPACTING PRIMARILY ON ETHNIC CHINESE -- IN AN EFFORT TO ADVANCE SOCIALIZATION AND IMPOSE TIGHTER CONTROLS. THE PRC CHOSE THIS ISSUE TO MAKE A MAJOR PUBLIC CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE SRV, HAVING EARLIER PLAYED DOWN THE CAMBODIA-VIETNAMESE DISPUTE AS AN ISSUE OF CONFRONTATION WITH THE SRV. THE SINO-VIETNAMESE AND VIETNAMESE-CAMBODIAN CONFRONTATIONS HAVE NOW BECOME MAJOR ISSUES, WITH THE CHINESE ACTIVELY ASSISTING CAMBODIA WITH MATERIAL AND POLITICAL SUPPORT AND TRYING TO PRESSURE THE VIETNAMESE; THE SOVIETS SUPPORTING HANOI POLITICALLY AND WITH AID; AND ALL THE PARTIES SEEKING TO STRENGTHEN THEIR DIPLOMATIC POSITIONS

WITH THIRD COUNTRIES.

4. VIETNAM-CAMBODIA MILITARY SITUATION.

VIETNAM'S CURRENT MILITARY OPERATIONS IN CAMBODIA  
APPEAR AIMED AT DESTROYING CAMBODIAN MAIN FORCES  
UNITS AND INSERTING PRO-HANOI KHMERS TRAINED IN THE SRV  
FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUBVERTING THE POL POT REGIME. WE  
CONSIDER IT UNLIKELY THAT THE SRV INTENDS TO ASSAULT  
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PHNOM PENH DIRECTLY OR TO SEIZE LARGE AREAS OF THE  
COUNTRY, DUE BOTH TO FEAR OF THE PRC AND THE HIGH COST  
OF SUCH AN OPERATION IN THE FACE OF FIERCE RESISTANCE.  
VIETNAMESE UNITS NOW OCCUPY SECTIONS OF PROVINCES NEAR  
THE BORDER BUT THE CAMBODIANS APPEAR TO BE VIGOROUSLY  
COUNTERATTACKING AND THE FIGHTING CONTINUES TO BE VERY  
INTENSE.

5. THE MOST RECENT VIETNAMESE OFFENSIVE WAS LAUNCHED

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IN JUNE AFTER MONTHS OF GROWING ANGER OVER CONTINUING  
CAMBODIAN ATTACKS INSIDE VIETNAM, SOMETIMES INVOLVING  
PENETRATIONS OF UP 30 KILOMETERS, PARTICULARLY IN THE  
EXTREME SOUTH BUT ALSO IN TAY NINH AND OTHER AREAS OF  
SRV STRENGTH. DURING THOSE MONTHS, THE SRV EFFORT SEEMED  
ESSENTIALLY DEFENSIVE, COUNTERACTING CAMBODIAN INCUR-  
SIONS BUT ALSO TRAINING ANTI-REGIME KHMER FOR AN INSUR-  
GENCY ROLE. THE JUNE OFFENSIVE IS SIMILAR IN INTENSITY  
TO HANOI'S DECEMBER-JANUARY OFFENSIVE, ALTHOUGH SOME  
FIGHTING HAS SPREAD TO AREAS IN THE EXTREME NORTH.  
PROBABLY FEWER THAN 20,000 VIETNAMESE ARE COMMITTED TO  
THE PRESENT OFFENSIVE (OUT OF 80,000 TO 100,000 DEPLOYED  
ALONG THE BORDER). THE CAMBODIANS HAVE ABOUT THE SAME  
NUMBER OF TROOPS IN THE AREA, OUT OF TOTAL ARMED FORCES  
THAT MAY NUMBER 100,000.

6. PEKING'S VIEWS. PEKING HAS BEEN ALARMED BY WHAT  
IT REGARDS AS HANOI'S DESIRE TO ESTABLISH "REGIONAL  
HEGEMONY" OVER INDOCHINA, AND BY WHAT IT SEES AS GROWING  
CLOSENESS BETWEEN VIETNAM AND THE SOVIET UNION. PEKING  
HAS ATTEMPTED TO PRESSURE HANOI BY ECONOMIC, DIPLOMATIC,  
AND PROPAGANDA MEANS. SUCH PRESSURES UNDOUBTEDLY WILL  
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CONTINUE, AND SOME MILITARY SKIRMISHES ARE A POSSIBILITY.  
BUT IT IS UNLIKELY CHINA WOULD TAKE SUCH DRASTIC ACTION  
AS ATTACKING VIETNAM OR COMMITTING TROOPS TO THE DEFENSE  
OF CAMBODIA (ALTHOUGH IT MAY WELL INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF

MILITARY SUPPORT TO CAMBODIA). BOTH CHINA AND VIETNAM HAVE TAKEN STEPS TO IMPROVE SURVEILLANCE AND WARNING, BUT THERE IS NO HARD EVIDENCE SO FAR OF ANY MAJOR MILITARY BUILDUP ON EITHER SIDE OF THEIR COMMON BORDER. LONGER TERM EFFORTS BY PEKING TO DEAL WITH THE VIETNAM PROBLEM INCLUDE CONTINUED STEPS TO STRENGTHEN ITS TIES AND THOSE OF CAMBODIA WITH THE ASEAN COUNTRIES (ESPECIALLY THAILAND) AND JAPAN SO AS TO LIMIT HANOI'S AND MOSCOW'S INFLUENCE, TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH OTHER FRIENDLY COUNTRIES USEFUL IN THE EFFORT TO COUNTERACT THE USSR (INCLUDING ANTI-SOVIET AND ANTI-CUBAN ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE NAM), AND TO MODERNIZE ITS INDUSTRY AND DEFENSE CAPABILITY.

7. VIETNAM'S REACTIONS TO CHINESE PRESSURES. PEKING'S POLEMICAL ATTACKS, THE CLOSING OF VIETNAM'S CONSULATES, AND THE REDUCTION AND SUBSEQUENT CUT-OFF OF AID, HAVE NOT MADE VIETNAM BOW TO THE PRESSURE, ALTHOUGH IT IS OBVIOUSLY FEARFUL OVER POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS OF CONFRONTING THE PRC SO DIRECTLY. HANOI HAS STEPPED UP ITS MILITARY EFFORT AGAINST CAMBODIA AND IT HAS TAKEN A VERY HARD LINE IN NEGOTIATING WITH THE PRC ON CONDITIONS OF DEPARTURE FOR

ETHNIC CHINESE. IT ALSO MOVED CLOSER TO MOSCOW WITH ITS DECISION TO JOIN CEMA AFTER YEARS OF BEING ONLY AN OBSERVER.

8. HOWEVER, THE VIETNAMESE FOLLOWED THAT WITH A MAJOR DIPLOMATIC CAMPAIGN AIMED AT CONVINCING THE NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES OF ASIA AND THE WEST, AND PERHAPS INDIRECTLY THE CHINESE, THAT THEY ARE NOT TOTALLY LOCKED INTO THE SOVIET CAMP, AND THAT THEY SEEK OTHER POLITICAL  
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AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT AS A MEANS OF AVOIDING AN OVERLY-TIGHT SOVIET EMBRACE AND SAFEGUARDING VIETNAM'S INDEPENDENCE. DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTERS NGUYEN CO TACH (IN WESTERN EUROPE) AND PHAN HIEN (IN ASIA) HAVE BEEN MAKING THIS POINT STRONGLY TO NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, ADDING THAT VIETNAM SEEKS TO RESOLVE ITS PROBLEMS WITH PEKING. THEY ARE PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO ALLEGATIONS OF SOVIET MILITARY BASES IN VIETNAM. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE AT THIS TIME TO SUPPORT CHARGES OF SUCH BASES, AND WE ARE WATCHING THIS ASPECT OF THE SITUATION WITH SPECIAL CARE. ONE OF THE INTERESTING SRV MOVES IN THIS CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN TO EXPLICITLY EXTEND FAVORABLE RECOGNITION TO ASEAN AS AN INSTITUTION, AS WELL AS WORKING TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH ITS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS. THE USSR HAS PARALLELED VIETNAM'S ACTION RE ASEAN.

9. THE VIETNAMESE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE U.S. HAS ALSO BEEN AFFECTED BY RECENT DEVELOPMENTS. A CAREFUL READING

OF PHAN HIEN'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS IN TOKYO, CANBERRA AND WELLINGTON PLUS COMMENTS HE HAS MADE PRIVATELY INDICATE A DESIRE TO RESUME TALKS WITH THE U.S. AND A NEW WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER OUR PROPOSAL OF ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONS FIRST AND LEAVING THE QUESTION OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR LATER DISCUSSION. THE VIETNAMESE HAVE ALSO BEEN MORE POSITIVE IN THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD MIA INFORMATION AND FAMILY REUNIFICATION, AN ISSUE WHICH REMAINS VERY IMPORTANT TO US. AS EXAMPLES OF VIETNAMESE POSITIVENESS, YOU MAY ALSO MENTION THAT STAFFERS FROM SENATOR KENNEDY'S SUBCOMMITTEE WILL VISIT VIETNAM TO ESCORT 15 VIETNAMESE CHILDREN WITH CLAIM TO AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP (AND 10 MOTHERS) TO THE U.S. ALSO, REPRESENTATIVE MONTGOMERY AND APPROXIMATELY NINE OTHER CONGRESSMEN WILL VISIT VIETNAM (AT SRV INITIATION)

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IN LATE AUGUST.

10. THE U.S. IS CAREFULLY CONSIDERING THE VIETNAMESE ATTITUDE AND HAS AGREED TO MEET WITH SRV REPRESENTATIVES AT SOME TIME DURING THE UNGA TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS OF NORMALIZATION. THIS LAST POINT YOU MAY MENTION IF APPROPRIATE TO SENIOR OFFICIALS, BUT STRESS THE CONFIDENTIALI-

TY OF THIS INFORMATION, AND THAT NO SPECIFIC DATE HAS BEEN SET FOR SUCH MEETINGS. VANCE

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** Z  
**Capture Date:** 26 sep 1999  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLITICAL SITUATION, REPORTS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 20 jul 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978STATE184093  
**Document Source:** ADS  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** EA/RA/HEHOROWITZ/MJ  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** 11652 GDS  
**Errors:** n/a  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780299-0057  
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**Handling Restrictions:**  
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**Legacy Key:** link1978/newtext/t197807106/baaazhu.tel  
**Line Count:** 249  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
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**Message ID:** b771566b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ORIGIN SS  
**Original Classification:** SECRET  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** EXDIS  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 5  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** SECRET  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** EXDIS  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 28 apr 2005  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 1857595  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** <DBA CORRECTED> jms 970820  
**Subject:** SITUATION IN INDOCHINA CINCPAC EXCLUSIVELY FOR ADMIRAL WEISNER 1. AMBASSADORS OR CHARGES AT ADDRESSEE  
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SENIOR HOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. IN DOING SO, YOU SHOULD MAKE CLEAR  
**TAGS:** MILI, PDIP, CB, US, VM  
**To:** BANGKOK CANBERRA MULTIPLE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgwkey:** odbcc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/b771566b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

